

ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



Annual Report

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
1949

P. J. FOX, M.B., B.Ch., B.A.O., D.P.H.

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ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT

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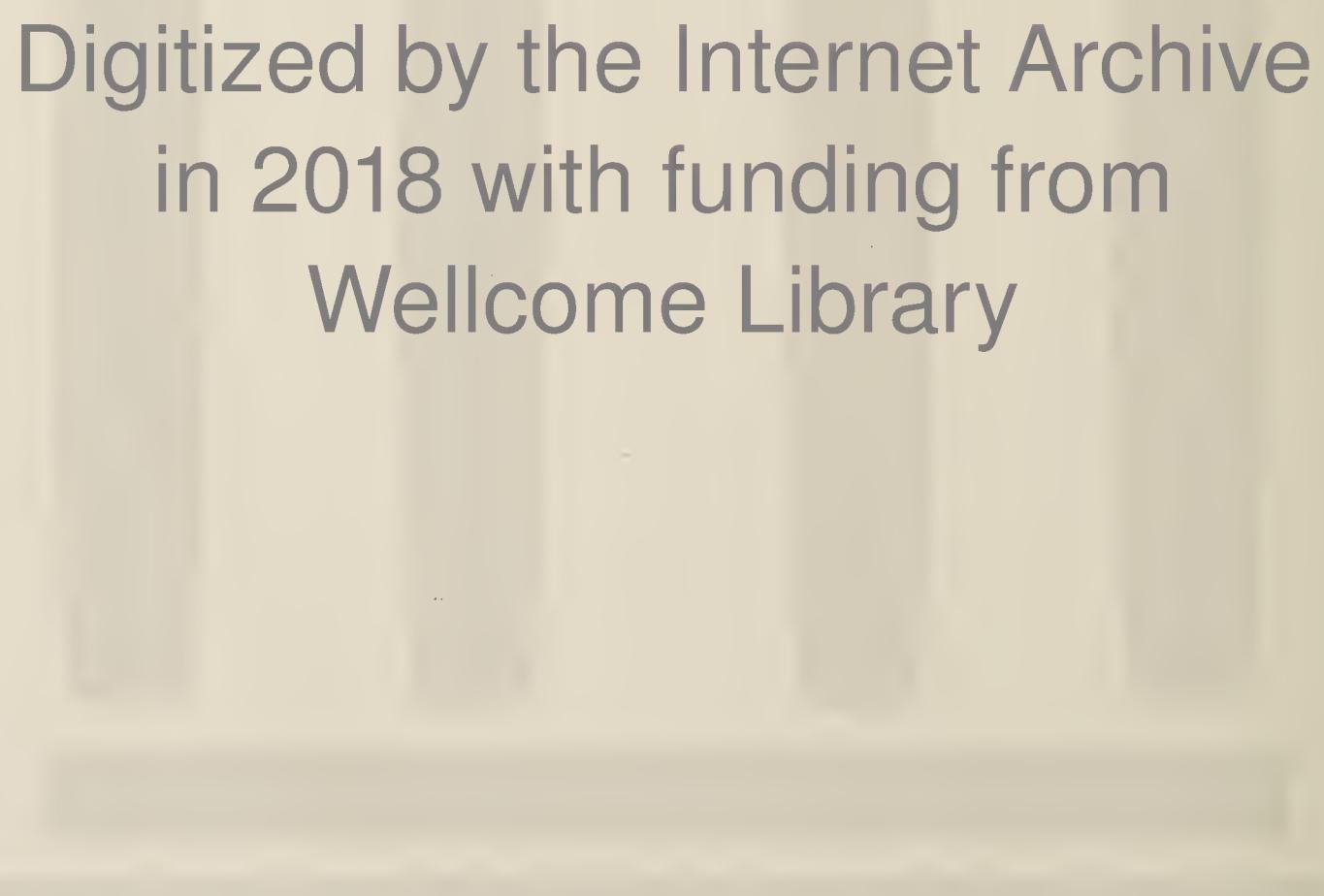
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ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT.

THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE
YEAR 1949.

To the Chairman and Members of the St. Germans Rural District Council.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report for the year 1949. Although there was a sharp increase in the number of infectious diseases notified, due almost entirely to an epidemic of measles, the health of the community in the Rural District was on the whole up to the average for the nation. As compared with 1948 the birth rate fell from 17.1 to 15.8 per 1,000 and the death rate showed a reduction from 14.3 to 13.0 per 1,000. There were no maternal deaths and the infant mortality rate at 8 per 1,000 live births was well below the figure of 32. for England and Wales. Although the total of infectious diseases notified was increased, the increase was almost entirely due to one of the least serious of these diseases, measles, which was prevalent in epidemic form in the early months of 1949.

One of the main, if not the main, foundations of good health is adequate housing - and by adequate I do not mean the bare essentials necessary to shelter from wind and weather. An adequate house is one which not only gives physical protection against the elements, but one in which also the individual and the family can find contentment and happiness. In our modern world inadequate housing is perhaps the most potent single cause of human unhappiness and frustration, which in their turn are basic, fundamental causes of vague, and often chronic ill-health. Bearing in mind the high cost of building and the restrictions and controls in force the completion of a further 90 houses during 1949 represents a very creditable achievement.

During the year the problem of caring for aged and infirm persons was encountered more than once. Many such old persons live alone, and through physical and mental infirmity, either of themselves or coupled with chronic illness, their living conditions deteriorate, and become progressively more insanitary. Most of these old persons do not take kindly to the notion of going to an institution where they can be cared for, and in many cases refuse to leave their homes. An added complication is the fact that many old persons suffer from minor chronic illness and/or physical defects which necessitate their admission to a hospital for chronic sick. Where this is the case the problem is even more difficult, since there is a considerable waiting list at the only hospital in this Area which deals with chronic sick. Much thought is being given to the care and welfare of the aged, but no rapid or easy solution of this problem can be expected, and progress in this matter is bound to be slow. Whilst dealing with this subject I can report that it was not necessary in any case for the Council to apply to the Magistrates for an order under Section 47 National Assistance Act, 1948, for the removal of aged, or infirm persons to a hospital or institution.

The total number of cases of tuberculosis notified during 1949, was 19, as against 14 in 1948. Tuberculosis differs mainly from other infectious diseases in being a chronic disease. In this respect it can, and does incapacitate those numbers of the community who suffer from it, for months, and indeed years, rendering them a burden to themselves and the national economy, and a potential source of danger to those with whom they live. Moreover tuberculosis is a killing disease which during 1949 was responsible for 5 deaths in the Rural District, and somewhere in the region of 19,000 deaths in England and Wales. It is a preventable disease, but unfortunately methods of prevention are physically difficult and financially expensive to put into operation. As far as the Rural District Council is concerned the provision of adequate housing is one of the most important contributions that can be made towards the solution of this problem.

Poliomyelitis - or to give its popular, though incorrect name, of infantile paralysis - has during the past three years been causing concern throughout the country. This disease which is notorious for the severe permanent paralysis it may cause is one of many due to viruses, which are germs too small to be seen by normal laboratory methods. Intensive research has been, and still is in progress to discover more about the disease, and more especially about its method of spread, but at present we do not know nearly enough about it, and specific preventive measures are therefore difficult to apply. During 1949 there were some outbreaks of moderate intensity in West Cornwall and indeed as far east as Fowey, but in south-east Cornwall we mercifully escaped, only two cases having been notified. No case was notified in the Rural District.

In this introduction I have dealt with those aspects of Public Health which will, I believe, be of interest to you. Some matters not touched upon in the preceding paragraphs will be dealt with in the body of my report. It remains for me to thank all those members and officials of the Council who have co-operated with me in the preservation and furtherance of the public health, and to express the hope that the happy relations which have existed throughout 1949 will be maintained in the future.

I have the honour to be,

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) P. J. FOX.

Medical Officer of Health.

ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT.

Area of Rural District	48,433 acres
Population (Registrar Generals Estimate).	15,730
Number of Inhabited Houses	4,673
Rateable Value of Rural District	£61,835. 10. 0.
Sum represented by Penny Rate.	£ 241. 12. 6.

VITAL STATISTICS FOR 1949.

<u>Live Births.</u>	Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	116	120	236
Illegitimate	7	5	12
	123	125	248

St. Germans R.D. Health Area No.7. England & Wales

Birth rate per 1000 of population	15.75	15.65	16.70
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<u>Still Births</u>	Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	5	3	8
Illegitimate	-	-	-
	5	3	8

St. Germans R.D. Health Area No.7. England & Wales.

Still births rate per 1000 of population	0.51	0.43	0.39
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<u>Deaths</u>	Male	Female	Total
	107	98	205

St. Germans R.D. Health Area No.7. England & Wales.

Death rate per 1000 of population	13.0	14.3	11.7
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Deaths Attributed to Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Puerperal State.

No deaths were registered under this head.

Deaths of Infants under One Year of Age.

<u>All Causes</u>	Male	Female	Total
	2	-	2

St. Germans R.D. Health Area No.7. England & Wales.

Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births	8.1	25.9	32.0
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Deaths from Enteritis and Diarrhoea under Two Years of Age.

No deaths were registered under this head.

Principal Causes of Death at All Ages.

Heart diseases	58
Cancer (all sites)	33
Respiratory diseases	30
Intra-cranial vascular lesions (stroke)	22
Accidents and other violent causes	8
Other circulatory diseases	6
Digestive diseases	5
Tuberculosis	5
Infantile diseases	3
Influenza	2
Suicide	2

Average Age at Death.

Males	Females
67.1	70.2

NOTE. Reference is made in the foregoing statistics to Health Area No.7. for the purpose of health administration the County is divided into seven Health Areas. Health Area No.7 is composed of the County Districts of Liskeard Borough, Saltash Borough, Looe Urban District, Torpoint Urban District, Liskeard Rural District and St. Germans Rural District. It has a total area of 164,000 acres, and a total population of 49,133.

General Provision of Health Services in the Rural District.

(a) Hospital Services. There are no hospitals in the Rural District, but adequate facilities are available at Plymouth which is the headquarters of the South Devon and East Cornwall Group of hospitals.

(b) Laboratory Services. In November 1949 a department of the Public Health Service was established in the Royal Cornwall Infirmary, Truro, and was available to carry out bacteriological examinations. In addition the Pathological Laboratories at the Royal Cornwall Infirmary, Truro, and the South Devon and East Cornwall Hospital, Greenbank, Plymouth, have carried out analyses.

Chemical analyses, which are seldom called for, are carried out by Dr. Hocking at the Royal Cornwall Infirmary, Truro.

(c) Services Provided by the Cornwall County Council under Part III of the National Health Service Act, 1946.

(1) Care of Mothers and Young Children. No ante-natal clinics were held in the Rural District, where the care of expectant mothers has been in the hands of the family doctor, and the district nurse-midwife. Where unsatisfactory home conditions or obstetric abnormalities made home confinement undesirable, the women concerned were admitted to the Alexandra Maternity Home, Devonport or the City Hospital, Plymouth.

During 1949 the following Infant Welfare Clinics were in operation in the St. Germans Rural District:-

Centre	Frequency	Organiser	Medical Officer	Average Attendance
Millbrook	Monthly	Miss S.L.Luxton Health Visitor	Dr.J.D.McMillan	31
Downderry	Monthly	Miss S.L.Luxton Health Visitor	Dr.J.D.McMillan	16
Callington	Monthly	Miss O.M.Wells Health Visitor	Dr.J.D.McMillan	14

In all three Clinics the average attendance per session shows an improvement as compared with 1948. In the case of Callington the majority of those attending come from the Calstock-Gunnislake district. It is the intention of the County Council to establish a Clinic in that district but difficulties of accommodation and equipment have so far prevented this. If and when it is established the attendance at the Callington Clinic will probably fall away to such an extent as to lead to its being closed.

(2) Midwifery Service. This service was provided mainly by eight district nurse-midwives working wholly within the Rural District. During 1949 they attended 145 confinements and carried out 2,800 visits in connection with this service.

(3) Health Visiting Service. Routine health visiting was carried out by district nurse-midwives, with the more specialised health visiting being undertaken by Miss Luxton Q.N.S., H.V., and Miss Wells Q.N.S., H.V.,

(4) Home Nursing Service. General home nursing has been carried out by eight district nurse-midwives. During the year they carried out 9,700 visits in connection with this service.

(5) Ambulance Services. No Main Centre of the County Ambulance Service was situated in the Rural District. At Callington the ambulance owned and operated by the local St. John Ambulance Brigade was available at night and over the week-end to serve the surrounding district, in return for certain payments made to the local Division by the County Council. At other times the Rural District was served mainly by ambulances at Saltash and Torpoint and to a lesser extent by ambulances at Liskeard and Looe. At all these Centres the local St. John Ambulance Brigade manned the ambulances at night and from 1 p.m. on Saturday until Monday morning. I feel that I am only voicing the sentiments of the community in thanking the members of the Brigade for the continuing spirit of service they have displayed in this matter.

(6) Prevention of Illness, Care and After-Care. The main active measures for the prevention of illness have been immunisation against diphtheria and vaccination against smallpox. The latter procedure which is now entirely optional has been viewed with apathy by the public and little vaccination has been carried out during the year. On the other hand the campaign for immunisation against diphtheria has been successful with as much as 80% of the susceptible under 5 year olds now protected against diphtheria. The success of this procedure can be measured by the virtual disappearance of diphtheria from the catalogue of children's diseases. Care and after-care schemes were confined to persons suffering from tuberculosis and took the form of monetary grants to enable these persons to buy extra rations of food. During 1949 4 such cases were in receipt of grants in the Rural District.

(7) Home Help Service. This service did not operate in the Rural District during 1949.

Prevalence of and Control over Infectious Diseases.

The total of 466 cases of infectious disease notified during 1949 represents a substantial increase over the figure of 176 cases in 1948. The greatest part of the increase is attributed to an epidemic of measles in the early part of the year. In addition there were small increases in scarlet fever, pneumonia and erysipelas. There was a reduction in whooping cough, and poliomyelitis, no cases of the latter disease having been notified in 1949, although the disease was prevalent in West Cornwall. The following are details of infectious diseases notified during 1949:-

Disease	Cases Notified	Rates per 1000 of population St. Germans R.D.	England Health Area No.7.	England and Wales
Measles	327	19.88	25.85	8.95
Whooping cough	96	6.10	3.76	2.39
Scarlet Fever	28	1.78	0.75	1.63
Pneumonia	9	0.57	1.26	0.80
Erysipelas	5	0.32	0.24	0.19
<u>Rates per 1000 total births</u>				
Postpartum pyrexia	1	3.91	2.53	6.31

Cases of infectious disease requiring hospital treatment are admitted to the Swilly Isolation Hospital, Beacon Park, Plymouth.

Tuberculosis. The notification of 19 cases of tuberculosis during 1949, as compared with 14 cases during 1948, shows an increased incidence of this disease. Of these 19 cases 15 were respiratory tuberculosis, and 4 were non-respiratory tuberculosis. During the year 4 persons died from respiratory tuberculosis, and 1 person from non-respiratory tuberculosis.

The following table shows details of new cases, and mortality from tuberculosis during 1949:-

Age Period	New cases		Deaths	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
0 - 1	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	1	-	-	-
5 - 15	-	1	-	-
15 - 45	8	6	1	-
45 - 65	2	1	1	1
65 and over	-	-	2	-

At the end of the year there were 92 known cases of respiratory tuberculosis and 12 known cases of non-respiratory tuberculosis resident in the Rural District. The mortality rate for tuberculosis was 0.32 per 1,000 of the population as against 0.45 for the country as a whole.

National Assistance Act, 1948. No action under Section 47 of this Act was called for during 1949.

Water Supply. The summer of 1949 was exceptionally dry, and in consequence the demand placed on water supplies during the summer months was exceptionally heavy. In addition there has been a steady extension of piped supplies to farms, and dwellings throughout the Rural District. As a result it was necessary to introduce certain restrictions during the summer months in order to maintain a reasonable reserve at the main reservoir of the South East Cornwall Water Board at Kelly Bray. Moreover with a view to avoiding further severe restrictions the Council reluctantly decided that all future applications for piped water supplies would have to be limited to water for domestic use only. It is the intention of the Water Board to seek means of augmenting their resources at the earliest possible moment, probably by abstracting water from the river Tiddy, but it will inevitably be some time before such a scheme can contribute its quota to the Board's resources. The general quality, and potability of the water supplied by the Board was excellent throughout the year.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal. Although the Council gave consideration to the need for proper methods of sewage disposal in various parts of the Rural District no actual new works of sewage disposal were undertaken during the year. The major problem in sewage disposal is still Callington, and it is to be hoped that during 1950 some active steps

will be taken to get this project in hand. Further details of sewerage work carried out in the Rural District during 1949 are contained in the report of the Sanitary Inspectors which follows.

Food. Routine inspection of premises in which food is produced, handled and retailed were undertaken during the year, and where necessary advice was given concerning improved methods of storing, and handling food. All meat sold in the Rural District is received from abattoirs outside the district. The sampling of ice-cream has been undertaken during the summer months when large quantities of this pleasant food were consumed. Hygienically, pre-packed ice-cream is the most satisfactory form in which this food can be handled, and sold, and I am glad to see that prepacked ice-cream is gradually displacing the unwrapped form from the market.

Food Poisoning. No outbreaks of food poisoning were reported during the year.

Clean Food Campaigns. No such campaigns were conducted in the Rural District during the year.

Housing. The number of new houses completed during the year, 90 in all, is an improvement over the 1948 figure of 63, and is a very creditable achievement. In addition 71 further houses were under construction at the end of 1949. If this rate of house construction can be maintained it gives promise that the housing problem is well on the way to a satisfactory solution in the Rural District.

Factories Act, 1937. No difficulties have arisen in connection with the small amount of work required by this Act.

Report of Sanitary Inspectors.

This report which follows has been compiled mainly by the Chief Sanitary Inspector, Mr.P.B.Govett, with the assistance of Mr. Grylls and Mr.Williams.

Mr.Govett retires from his present appointment in August, 1950, and as far as he is concerned the present report is valedictory. In closing a long, and valuable career in the service of local government in South East Cornwall, Mr.Govett has drawn a picture of the great improvements which have come to pass in the Rural District since he first came to deal in 1910 with matters bearing on the health of the community. As Medical Officer of Health I shall be sorry to lose Mr.Govett's sage counsel, and wide experience in coping with problems of public health in a rural area. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking him for the assistance he has given me since I became your Medical Officer of Health in 1948, and to wish him many years of happiness in his retirement. I should also like to put on record my gratitude to Mr.Grylls and Mr.Williams for the willing assistance they have given me throughout the year.

ST. GERMANS RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT OF SANITARY INSPECTOR.

This is the last time that I shall have the privilege of making a contribution to the Medical Officer of Health's annual report for the St. Germans Rural District. I do so with somewhat mixed feelings after a period of unbroken service with the Council since the early part of the year 1910. During that time it has been my pleasure to work with four Medical Officers of Health and five Clerks to the Council, all of which have enriched my official experience, whilst I have seen a complete renewal of members of the Council and an extension of the district. Despite my many failures and disappointments I trust I leave to my successors not an undue amount of material that will condemn a lifetime of conscientious endeavour.

In dealing with the following sections I might be forgiven if I very casually compare the position of some of the service at present obtaining with those of 1910 particularly with regard to the public water supply which during the period of my office has occupied more of my attention than any other service.

Water Supply.

In 1910 the villages of Antony, Wilcove, Botusfleming, Landrake, Cargreen, Pillaton, Quethiock, St. Germans, Polbathic, Tideford, St. John, St. Mellion, Crafthole, Sheviock and the hamlets of Rame, Minard Cross, Narkurs, Trerulefoot, Bethany, Tideford Cross, Paynters Cross, Hatt, Trehunist, Blunts, and at the time of the reconstitution of the district in 1934, the villages of Latchley, Chilsworthy, Metherell, St. Dominic, Bohetherick, and places within their precincts were wholly or partially dependent upon "village pump" system of public water supply. Such water as was available was invariably found to be either definitely contaminated with subsoil drainage or the sources very open to suspicion of pollution. The public supply for Callington town was at that time in the hands of a private Company with no statutory powers. Thanks to the generally consistent and progressive attitude of the members of the St. Germans Council with the co-operation of their officers during the period of 40 years (which unfortunately was interrupted by 10 years of war). All the before mentioned conditions have been "wiped off the slate", and the district can now claim to have provided piped water supplies for about 90% of its population. Further numerous services for agricultural and other non-domestic purposes have been laid on for the benefit of the district generally. The yearly revenue from water rates and charges in the district has risen from approximately £300 to £8,000 and most of the capital cost was incurred during a period when public works were costing less than 50% of what is applicable to-day. 60 additional services for domestic purposes, 28 for trade and 7 for combined trade and domestic have been laid on to consumers premises from mains in the district during the year.

The exceptionally long summer weather during the year has clearly demonstrated how great is the increasing demand for water from the public supply. There were days when the demand was greater than the available supply and the extent of the demand for agricultural purposes during periods of drought may be appreciated by the fact that immediately after rainfall the water consumption in the district dropped by nearly 100,000 gallons per day. The bulk supply of 400,000 gallons per day from the South East Cornwall Water Boards source is evidently insufficient to cope with the future legitimate requirements of the districts.

During the year about 350 yards of 5" main has been renewed in Lunceston Road, Callington, and 300 yards of new 3" mains have been constructed to serve premises at Lower Kelly, Calstock. In Antony parish where the supply to Wilcove has not been satisfactory from the Torpoint main a scheme has been adopted whereby a direct connection with the Water Boards main near Antony village and the construction of about 1,000 yards of 3" main has been effected and is giving general satisfaction. Other schemes have been prepared for

Ministerial approval for the construction of 1,700 yards of 4" main from Carracawn Cross to Hessenford village (the only village in the district which has not yet a piped public supply) 500 yards of 3" main to Horsepool, St.Mellion, and 120 yards of 3" main in Under Road Gunnislake.

The proposed main extension to Tredis from St.Winnolls in the parish of Sheviock has not yet been accomplished but it is hoped this scheme will be implemented in the near future.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal.

Sewerage and Sewage disposal works have not during the same period made such satisfactory progress in the district as water works. Since these must necessarily have first priority there now remains a fairly extensive amount of work to be done in the district before the standard of this section of public service can be raised to the same standard as that of water supply.

Obsolete stone walled sewers are undesirable features still existing in the district particularly at St.Germans, Callington and parts of Calstock parish, but in most of the other parts of the district pipe sewers are general. Some sewage disposal systems for the villages are due for improvement if they are to conform to the standards laid down by the Ministry of Health.

A tender has been approved for the Seaton sewerage scheme which include a sea outfall in the Liskeard Rural District whose Council has agreed to share the cost of the sewerage from a point near Seaton Bridge where the combined sewer serves the adjacent areas. There appears to be no reason why the works should not be completed before another summer season commences with the normal influx of visitors to this popular seaside resort.

The schemes for sewerage and sewage disposal works for the villages of St.Germans and Quethiock have been submitted to the Ministry of Health and approved in principle but the Ministry requires certain modifications to the pumping machinery and treatment works on the St.Germans scheme, and the provision of a percolating filter at Quethiock. Both the schemes have accordingly been modified to meet the Ministry's requirements.

A scheme for the improvement of Callington sewerage system and the treatment of sewage on a site already owned by the Council away from the town has been prepared and is being submitted to the County Council for their observation with a view to formal application being made to the Ministry of Health for sanction to a loan to carry out the work which is of the highest priority in the district.

A length of 70 yards of walled sewer at Calstock village has been abolished and a 9" salt-glazed ware pipe sewer substituted complete with two new manholes, thereby removing a most troublesome section of sewerage which had been the cause of flooding some of the lower levels of adjacent property. Another length of 100 yards has been constructed in Church Street to provide drainage facilities for the new Council Housing Site upon which 24 houses are being erected.

The reconstruction of a section of the combined sewer in Armada Street, Cawsand, has subject to periodical clearing of the inlet gratings, successfully remedied a somewhat seasonal flooding of property on the lower levels.

Refuse Collection.

This service continues to function satisfactorily generally and is a pronounced advancement on what obtained at the beginning of my official connection with the district. At that time the only places in the district which had any recognised system of refuse collection were Millbrook, Kingsand and Cawsand. All of the collection was carried out by local contractors who provided their

own system of refuse disposal on three sites adjacent to the highway where appetites of fat pigs, gulls and rats were apparently satisfied, the former to the financial benefit of the Contractors.

In 1934 the collection of refuse at Callington was by means of a Council owned horse drawn vehicle of the open cart type, whilst no regular service existed for the parish of Calstock. Since the amalgamation of Callington and Calstock with the St. Germans District a regular collection and disposal service was instituted for the whole district which continues to function smoothly, the Council having acquired two modern refuse collection vehicles, operating on the north and south of the river Tiddy respectively.

The main centres of population and the majority of villages receive weekly collection whilst Millbrook, Kingsand, Cawsand and Downderry a twice weekly service is in operation. Fortnightly collection is undertaken in the more sparsely populated areas where virtually no demand exists for more frequent collections.

Public Conveniences.

Public conveniences for both sexes are provided at Calstock, Gunnislake, Callington, Downderry, Millbrook, Kingsand and Cawsand and excepting the men's conveniences at Kingsand and Cawsand, are of a reasonably good standard. The latter are intended to be modernised during the coming year. Schemes for the provision of conveniences for both sexes are under consideration for Portwrinkle and Cremyll and the demand for a public convenience at Seaton should be considered now that sewerage accommodation is being made available.

Housing.

The Post-War Housing programme has again held the monopoly during the year and although it is admitted that there are many sub-standard properties in the district the main effort has been directed towards the provision of new houses rather than to divert the available building labour force to the reconditioning of old properties. The number of new houses completed during the year was 90. Number under construction at 31st December, 1949. was 71. Number approved but not commenced at 31.12.49. was 26.

The total number of post war houses completed by 31st December, 1949, was 217 which, together with those under construction and not started at that date, give a very commendable total of 314 post war houses. In addition to this, 130 houses were erected pre-war and the accumulative totals show how this phase of the Council's responsibilities have increased.

During the year 13 private enterprise building licences were issued, and 15 new dwellings were completed. Since the war, therefore, 23 houses have been provided by private enterprise in the District.

Inspection of and Control over Food Supplies.

Realising the importance of modernisation and improved hygienic conditions, there has been a marked tendency during the year among Milk Producers to provide such facilities for the production of milk as would enable them to use a Special Designation, and it is gratifying to report that several additional Producers have attained the standards required. Routine inspections have played no little part in this direction and now that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries have taken over the whole of the administration of the production side of the Milk and Dairies Orders a transfer that has been envisaged for some time past, it is to be hoped that future results will prove it an advantageous step.

Meat and Other Foods.

Although the District's meat supply is received from Ministry of Food Abbatoirs outside the area, much useful inspection has been applied to retail butchers' shops throughout the District.

Other retail shops and fishmongers' premises have been regularly checked and the general ready co-operation of the traders concerned in surrendering unsound articles of food has been most helpful and much appreciated.

Ice cream was again much in demand and many more premises have been registered during the year. In most cases, as in the previous year, registration has been for the sale of the pre-packed product, which is obtained either from the two authorised manufacturers within the area, or from reputed suppliers at Plymouth and Launceston. Samples taken have been satisfactory and consistent, and inspections of production plants in operation have confirmed the manufacturers' zealous regard for their reputations.

